

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01  
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
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P R 101225Z MAR 77  
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 260  
INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA  
AMEMBASSY KABUL  
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN  
AMCONSUL KARACHI  
AMCONSUL LAHORE

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 2341

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PK, PINT  
SUBJECT: PAKISTAN POLITICS

SUMMARY: THE FUNDAMENTAL POLITICAL FACT OF PAKISTANI LIFE  
IN THE WAKE OF THE ELECTION IS THAT PM BHUTTO RETAINS  
HIS DOMINANT POSITION. ALTHOUGH THE CAMPAIGN EVIDENCED  
DEEP-SEATED AND WIDESPREAD DISSATISFACTION WITH THE BHUTTO  
GOVERNMENT AND THE PPP, AND DISCLOSED MORE CLEARLY THAN  
BEFORE THE EROSION OF THE PM'S OWN PERSONAL POPULARITY,  
THE ELECTION OUTCOME DEMONSTRATED THAT BY WHATEVER MEANS  
BHUTTO WAS ABLE TO TURN BACK THE CHALLENGE OF AN UNEXPECTEDLY  
UNITED OPPOSITION AND MAINTAIN HIS SUPREMACY. WITHIN  
THE PPP ITSELF, HIS PARTYMEN ARE IF POSSIBLE EVEN MORE  
DEPENDENT ON HIM FOR THEIR POLITICAL STANDING THAN THEY  
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WERE BEFORE THE ELECTION.  
THE PNA'S DECISION NOT TO CONTEST THE PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS  
OR TAKE THE 37-38 SEATS IT WON IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY  
WILL MARK THE END OF PAKISTAN'S FRAGIL MULTIPARTY  
LEGISLATIVE SYSTEM, ASSUMING ALL MNAS-ELECT ACCEPT THE  
ALLIANCE DIRECTIVE. PAKISTAN PARTY POLITICS WILL CONSIST  
ENTIRELY OF EXTRA-LEGISLATIVE AGITATION. THE FORM THAT

THIS WILL TAKE IS STILL TO BE CHARTED BY THE OPPOSITION.  
ARRMENTS OVER WHETHER THE CONDUCT OF THE POLLING JUSTIFIED  
THE DECISION, AND WHETHER IT WAS TACTICALLY SOUND, ARE LIKELY  
TO CONTINUE. OUR OWN TENTATIVE CONCLUSION IS THAT  
SUBSTANTIAL TAMPERING PROBABLY DID TAKE PLACE ON MARCH 7,  
AND THAT WHILE IT DID NOT DETERMINE THE ULTIMATE OUTCOME  
OF THE ELECTION, WHICH WE BELIEVE THE PPP WOULD HAVE WOJ  
ANYWAY, IT DID INFLUENCE THE MARGIN OF THE BHUTTO VICTORY.  
THE VERDICT OF THE PAK PUBLIC ISHGOT YET IMGUT WE SUSPECT  
THAT MOST PAKS ARE LIKELY TO DRAW SOME CONCLUSION.  
WHATEVER TACTICS THE OPPOSITION NOW ADOPTS IN CARRYING  
OUT ITS NEW AGITATIONAL APPROACH, AND HOWEVER WIDELY  
HELD THE VIEW THAT IT WAS CHEATED ON MARCH 7, WE HAVE  
LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE ABLE TO CONTAIN  
ITS CHALLENGE IN THE NEARTERM. END SUMMARY

1. THE LAHORE DECISIONS OF THE PNA CENTRAL COMMITTEE  
(A) CONFIRMING THE ALLIANCE LEADERSHIP'S EARLIER MOVE TO  
BOYCOTT THE PROVINCIAL ELECTION, (B) FORMALLY REJECTING  
THE RESULTS OF THE MARCH 7 NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS,  
AND (C) DIRECTING CANDIDATES ELECTED TO THE NA NOT TO  
ENTER THAT BODY MARK IF WDL CARRIED OUT THE END OF PAKISTAN'S  
FRAGILE MULTIPARTY LEGISLATIVE SYSTEM. ASSUMING THAT THE  
37-38 ALLIANCE MNAS-ELECT ACCEPT THE LEADERSHIP'S DIROCTIVE,  
THEY WILL BE PROBPTLY REPLACED BY PPP MEMBERS, PROBABLY  
THROUGH LARGELY UNCONTESTED BY ELECTIONS. THERE HAVE  
BEEN TWO SPELLS IN ITS HISTORY WHEN PAKISTAN WAS RULED  
BY MARTIAL LAW (1958-62, 1969-72) AND HAD NO FUNCTIONING  
LEGISLATURES, BUT THIS WILL BE THE FIRST TIME THAT LL  
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LEGISLATIVE BODIES WILL CONSIST SOLELY OF REPRESENTATIVES  
OF THE GOVERNING PARTY.

2. OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS, POLITICS IN PAKISTAN HAVE  
BEEN CHARACTERIZED BY A COMBINATION OF LEGISLATIVE  
CONFRONTATIONS PLUS EXTRA LEGISLATIVE AGITATION. IF THE  
PNA FOLLOWS THROUGH ON ITS DECISIONS, PAKISTAN'S POLITICS  
OUTSIDE THE PPP WILL CONSIST ENTIRELY OF THE LATTER. THE FORM THAT TH  
IS  
WILL TAKE IS NOT CLEAR, AND REMAINS TO BE CHARTED BY  
OPPOSITION LEADERS. ASGHAR KHAN HAS ALREADY STATED THAT  
THE ALLIANCE MEANS TO USE PEACEFUL METHODS, AND ITS  
CALL FOR A HARTAL (WORK STOPPAGE) ON MARCH 11 IN  
PROTEST AGAINST THE WAY THE ELECTIONS HAVE BEEN CONDUCTED  
SPEAKS OF A PEACEFUL EFFORT. WE SUSPECT THAT OVER THE  
LONGER TERM THE OPPOSITION WILL IMPROVISE, MOUNTING  
AGITATIONS FROM TIME TO TIME AS APPROPRIATE OPPORTUNITIES  
ARISE, COURTING ARREST NOW AND AGAIN, USING WHATEVER  
NON-CONFRONTATIONAL MEANS ARE AVAILABLE TO THEM AT OTHER

TIMES. IT WILL BE A LENGTHY PROCESS, AND COULD INVOLVE HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS WHICH COULD COMPLICATE US-PAKISTAN RELATIONS. BUT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW THERE CAN BE ANY TURNING BACK, AND HOW AN OPPOSITION LEADERSHIP WHICH CLAIMS TO HAVE BEEN REPEATEDLY BETRAYED BY BHUTTO AND HAS ABANDONED ANY PLACE IN THE COUNTRY'S LEGISLATIVE LIFE, CAN FIND AN OCCASION FOR A DIALOGUE WITH HIM PAVING THE WAY FOR ITS RESUMING A PLACE IN NORMAL POLITICAL PROCESSES.FD

3. ARGUMENT

S OVER WHETHER THE OPPOSITION'S DECISION WAS JUSTIFIED BY THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTION OUTCOME AND WHETHER IT MAKES SOUND TACTICAL SENSE ARE LIKELY TO GO ON FOR SOME TIME (THOUGH THERE IS NO EVIDENCE YET OF ANY DISAGREEMENT ON THESE SCORES WITHIN THE ALLIANCE LEADERSHIP ITSELF.) IT IS DIFFICULT IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE FOR OBJECTIVE OBSERVERS TO SORT OUT THE OPPOSITION'S ALLEGATIONS OF CONFIDENTIAL

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MASSIVE RIGGING OF THE ELECTION IN THE PUNJAB. MANY PAKISTANIS WE HAVE TALKED TO HERE CLAIM THAT EITHER THEY OR THEIR FAMILIES PERSONALLY WITNESSED OR WERE THE VICTIMS OF POLLING IRREGULARITIES, PARTICULARLY IN THE WOMEN'S POLLING AREAS. SOME BUT NOT ALL FOREIGN NEWSMEN WHO WERE HERE TO COVER THE ELECTION AND WERE GIVEN FREE ACCESS TO POLLING STATIONS REPORT SOME ALLEGATIONS OF FRAUD MADE BY PNA WORKERS IN THE COURSE OF THE VOTING, BUT THEY SAY THEY NEITHER SAW NOR HEARD OF ANY EVIDENCE OF MASSIVE TAMPERING. CONGEN LAHORE REPORTS THAT LL SOURCES CANVASSED THERE AGREE THAT THERE WAS SOME RIGGING ALTHOUGH THEY DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH.

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AMCONSUL LAHORE  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 2341

4. OUR OWN TENTATIVE CONCLUSION IS THAT SUBSTANTIAL TAMPERING PROBABLY DID TAKE PLACE, AND THAT WHILE IT DID NOT DETERMINE THE ULTIMATE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTION, WHICH WE BELIEVE THE PPP WOULD HAVE WON ANYWAY, IT DID INFLUENCE THE MARGIN OF THE BHUTTO VICTORY. ALTHOUGH WE BELIEVE THAT THERE IS AMPLE EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT IN THE LAST DAYS OF THE CAMPAIGN THERE WAS A TREND IN THE PUNJAB IN FAVOR OF THE PPP, WE FIND IT DIFFICULT TO EXPLAIN THE LANDSLIDE NATURE OF THE FINAL TALLY EXCEPT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE USE OF THE ELECTORAL MACHINERY IN FAVOR OF PPP CANDIDATES. WHAT MAY WELL HAVE HAPPENED IS THAT ARRANGEMENTS WERE MADE TO TIP THE RESULTS IN A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF CONSTITUENCIES, BUT THAT THE TREND TOWARD THE PPP AND OVERZEALOUSNESS ON THE PART OF GOVERNMENT AND PPP OPERATIVES PRODUCED A VICTORY MUCH BEYOND WHAT WAS SOUGHT. IT IS DIFFICULT TO FINE TUNE THIS KIND OF OPERATION. WE CAN'T BE SURE, BUT GIVEN THE SUBSTANTIAL PULLING POWER THE PNA HAD DEMONSTRATED, THE SELF-CONFIDENTIAL

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ADMITTED WEAKNESS OF THE PPP IN AREAS IN WHICH IT LATER WON HANDILY, THE EVIDENCE OF TAMPERING, THE LAST-MINUTE SWING TOWARD THE PPP, AND THE UNLIKELIHOOD OF BHUTTO LEAVING TO CHANCE ANYTHING AS CRUCIAL AS HIS OWN POLITICAL FUTURE, WE THINK THIS IS THE MOST LIKELY EXPLANATION. LATER EVIDENCE MAY SUGGEST OTHERWISE.

5. MORE IMPORTANT THAN WHAT WE CONCLUDE IS WHAT THE

PAKISTANIS THEMSELVES MAKE OF IT. THEIR VERDICT IS NOT IN YET. THERE ARE DOUBTLESS MANY PNA SUPPORTERS WHO BELIEVE THAT THE ALLIANCE WAS CHEATED OF VICTORY. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PNA HARTAL CALL WILL PROVIDE SOME EVIDENCE OF POPULAR FEELING, BUT WILL NOT BE CONCLUSIVE. WE SUSPECT ON THE BASIS OF PRELIMINARY EVIDENCE THAT THE ULTIMATE MOOD ON THE PART OF MOST OF THOSE WHO ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THESE THINGS (AND DO NOT SIMPLY ACCEPT LARGE GOVERNMENT VICTORY MARGINS AS THE NATURAL ORDER OF THINGS IN

PAKISTAN) IS THAT THE PPP WOULD HAVE WON, BUT THAT AS IN SO MANY OTHER POLITICAL ACTIONS BHUTTO ARRANGED A MASSIVE OVERKILL.

6. IN MAKING ITS ANNOUNCED DECISIONS TO WITHDRAW FROM LEGISLATIVE AND ELECTIVE POLITICS, THE PNA WAS MOVED BY A DESIRE TO MAKE A DRAMATIC DEMONSTRATION OF ITS CONVICTION THAT NORMAL DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL PRACTICES ARE UNWORKABLE AS LONG AS BHUTTO IS IN POWER. ITS UNEXPECTED DRUBBING IN THE ELECTION HAS APPARENTLY PERSUADED ITS LEADERSHIP THAT ANY PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIVE POLITICS REPRESENTS ACCEPTANCE OF WHAT IT REGARDS AS THEIR BASICALLY FRAUDULENT CHARACTER. IT SEES MORE PROFIT IN THE SHOCK EFFECT OF WITHDRAWAL THAN IN THE LIMITED ROLE IT CAN CONTINUE TO PLAY IN LEGISLATIVE BODIES. IT PROBABLY ALSO HAD IN MIND THE IMPACT ITS ACTION WILL HAVE ON BHUTTO'S PRESTIGE IN THE WEST. THERE WILL BE MANY WHO WILL QUESTION ITS DECISION, INCLUDING NO DOUBT SOME OF THOSE

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JUST ELECTED. A GOOD ARGUMENT CAN BE MADE THAT THERE ARE IMPORTANT BENEFITS IN PARTICIPATION, WHICH PROVIDES SOME LEGITIMACY AND PRESTIGE, AT LEAST A LIMITED FORUM FOR EXPRESSION IN A POLITICAL SETTING WHERE THIS IS LIEKLY TO CONTINUE TO BE HARD TO COME BY AND SOME IMMUNITY FROM ARREST. THE DECISION TO BOYCOTT THE PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS CAN ALSO BE QUESTIONED, PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD TO NWFP. THE FINAL UNOFFICIAL COUNT INDICATES THAT THE PNA WON 17 SEATS THERE TO THE PPP'S EIGHT. HAD THE PNA PARTICIPATED IN THE PROVINCIAL ELECTION IT MIGHT HAVE WON OR, MORE LIKELY GIVEN THE IMPORTANCE TO THE GOP OF A FRIENDLY GOVERNMENT IN PESHAWAR, BEEN THE VICTIME OF THE KIND OF MASSIVE RIGGING WHICH WOULD HAVE STRENGTHENED ITS CLAIM THAT IT WAS DEFRAUDED WHEREVER THE PPP FOUND VICTORY NECESSARY.

7. WHATEVER TACTICS THE OPPOSTION NOW ADOPTS IN CARRYING OUT ITS NEW AGITATIONAL APPROACH AND HOWEVER WIDELY HELD THE VIEW THAT IT WAS CHEATED ON MARCH 7, WE HAVE LITTLE DOUBUT THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE ABLE TO CONTAIN ITS CHALLENGED IN THE NEARTERM. THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN, CARRIED OUT IN A REMARABLE FREE ATOMSPHERE, EVIDENCED DEEP-SEATED AND WIDESPREAD DISSATISFACTION WITH THE BHUTTO GOVERNMENT AND THE PPP. THE MIS-MANAGEMENT OF THE ECONOMY, CORRUPTION IN GOVERNMENT, THE HIGHHANDEDNESS OF THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE "NEW ELITES", WERE THEMES WHICH DREW AN IMMEDIATE AND ENTHUSIASTIC RESPONSE WHEN VOICED BY OPPOSITION CAMPAIGNERS. THE CAMPAIGN ALSO DISCLOSED MORE CLEARLY THAN BEFORE THE EROSION OF BHUTTO'S OWN PERSONAL POPULARITY FROM ITS HEIGHTS OF THE EARLY SEVENTIES, AND THE LIMITED ATTRACTIVENESS OF MANY OF HIS SENIOR COLLEAGUES. BUT

MUCH MORE SIGNIFICANTLY, THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTION  
DEMONSTRATED THAT, BY WHATEVER MEANS, BHUTTO WAS ABLE  
TO TURN BACK THE CHALLENGE OF AN UNEXPECTEDLY UNITED  
OPPOSITION AND REMAIN THE DOMINANT FIGURE ON THE PAKISTAN  
POLITICAL SCENE. IT ALSO DEMONSTRATED ONCE AGAIN THAT  
THE PPP IS THE LENGTHENED SHADOW OF THE PM. HE WAS  
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THE ARCHITECT AND MANAGER OF THE PARTY'S VICTORY, AND  
HIS PARTYMEN ARE NOW EVEN MORE EVIDENTLY DEPENDENT ON  
HIM FOR THEIR POLITICAL STANDING THAN THEY WERE BEFORE  
THE ELECTION. THE FUNDAMENTAL POLITICAL FACT OF PAKISTANI  
LIFE IN THE WAKE OF THE ELECTION IS THAT THE PM IS VERY  
MUCH IN CHARGE. SOMEWHERE DOWN THE LINE, HE MAY FACE A  
SERIOUS CHALLENGED IN THE STREETS, MOST LIKELY IN CIRCUMSTANCES  
INVOLVING GRAVE ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES, AND AT THAT TIME  
POPULAR (AND MILITARY) ASSESSMENTS OF HOW HE RETAINED OFFICE  
IN 1977 MAY PLAY SOME ROLE IN DETERMINING HIS STAYING POWER.  
BUT THAT SEEMS A LONG WAY OFF.

8. HOW WE EXPECT BHUTTO TO MAKE USE OF HIS RENEWED  
MANDATE, FLAWED OR OTHERWISE, WILL BE THE SUBJECT OF A  
SEPARATE MESSAGE WE WILL DRAFT NEXT WEEK FOLLOWING A  
MEETING HERE WITH THE SUBORDINATE POST PRINCIPAL OFFICERS.  
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## Message Attributes

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